

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, UK

SUBJECT: CIVAIR - FUTURE PLANS FOR USE OF HEATHROW AND
GATWICK AIRPORTS

1. DURING US-UK CIVAIR CONSULTATIONS LAST WEEK, ROGERS OF UK DOT SAID THAT BRITISH WOULD IN SEVERAL WEEKS ANNOUNCE TENTATIVE DECISIONS REGARDING FUTURE USE OF HEATHROW AND GATWICK AIRPORTS. HE SAID THAT SOLUTION TO CONGESTION AT HEATHROW WAS TO TRANSFER SOME OR ALL TRANSATLANTIC FLIGHTS (WHICH WERE THE MAIN CAUSE OF CONGESTION DUE TO PEAKING) TO GATWICK AND THAT UK ENVISIONED THAT US AND UK MIGHT INCLUDE IN BERMUDA RENEGOTIATION WHICH ROUTES WOULD USE GATWICK ONLY. DUE PRESS OTHER BUSINESS, USDEL GAVE NO RESPONSE TO ROGERS' REMARKS AND SAID IT WOULD SEND A RESPONSE SUBSEQUENTLY.

2. EMBASSY REQUESTED DELIVER FOLLOWING PAPER TO UK DOT UNDER COVER OF LETTER STATING THAT PAPER IS US RESPONSE TO ROGERS' REMARKS ON HEATHROW/GATWICK QUESTION:

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A. US DOES NOT KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT THE DETAILS OF THE LONDON

AIRPORT PROBLEM TO ADDRESS IT FULLY AT THIS TIME. BASICALLY, IT BELIEVES THAT THE PROBLEM IS ONE FOR THE UK TO RESOLVE CONSISTENT WITH CONSIDERATIONS OF EQUITY AND COMITY

AND WITH ITS BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL OBLIGATIONS (SUCH AS THE CHICAGO CONVENTION) AND TAKING FULLY INTO ACCOUNT COMPETITIVE CONSIDERATIONS, PUBLIC CONVENIENCE, AND COMMERCIAL DISLOCATIONS. DISTINGUISHING DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHIC AREAS FOR DIFFERENT TREATMENT MAY APPEAR EVEN HANDED BUT RESULTS IN SIGNIFICANT DISTORTIONS WITH MANY INEQUITIES. THE PROBLEM IS NOT, IN THE US VIEW, SUSCEPTIBLE TO SOLUTION IN A BILATERAL CONTEXT.

B. AMONG THE COMPETITIVE CONSIDERATIONS ARE THE FOLLOWING:

1. HEATHROW AND GATWICK ARE NOT, AND APPARENTLY WILL NOT BE, EQUIVALENT IN TERMS OF PUBLIC AND AIRLINE ACCEPTANCE, ACCESSIBILITY, INTERNATIONAL CONNECTING SERVICES, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND TRAFFIC SUPPORT FACILITIES.

2. BECAUSE THEIR NATURAL TRAFFIC FLOWS ARE LIKELY TO DIFFER, A US AND A UK AIRLINE OPERATING A TRANSATLANTIC ROUTE AT GATWICK WOULD NOT BE IN COMPARABLE COMPETITIVE SITUATIONS.

C. THE US APPRECIATES THE CONGESTION PROBLEMS AT LONDON AIRPORTS. IT BELIEVES THAT THE SOLUTION LIES IN VOLUNTARY MEASURES BY THE AIRLINES AND IN COMMERCIAL INDUCEMENTS BY THE AIRPORT AUTHORITIES. DIRECTED SOLUTIONS ARE INAPPROPRIATE BECAUSE THEY WILL INEVITABLY IMPOSE UNACCEPTABLE INEQUITIES. THE US TRUSTS, THEREFORE, THAT THE UK AUTHORITIES WILL CONSULT CLOSELY WITH AFFECTED AIRLINES AND, IF NECESSARY, WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS BEFORE MAKING SPECIFIC DECISIONS. KISSINGER

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